
Windows into the Soul: Surveillance and Society in an Age of High Technology, by Gary T. Marx. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016. 400 pp. \$105.00 cloth. ISBN: 9780226285917.

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Windows into the Soul: Surveillance and Society in an Age of High Technology is the long-awaited monograph by Gary T. Marx, professor emeritus from MIT and pioneering scholar in the maturing field of surveillance studies. The book is an important and timely statement on the subject; but more, it is a *tour de force* of Marx's trademark witty intelligence, engaging writing, and insightful social commentary. *Windows* is a pastiche of materials—a dash of something for everyone, new students and seasoned scholars alike—based on the author's decades of scholarship on watching and being watched. There is deep conceptual discourse, empirical examples drawn from Marx's interviews and fieldwork, satirical fiction, comic relief, pop culture, photos, and cartoons, all woven together. Marx has so much to say that even this 400-page tome cannot contain him;

a portfolio of supplemental materials can be found on the publisher's website.

Windows is unconventional in a number of ways. Marx is not developing new concepts and testing them, he is not making an argument for a particular "school" or theory, nor is he offering details about particular surveillance technologies or how they operate. Rather, he tries to chart a course between what he calls the underspecified and grand narrative of the "surveillance essay" and the narrower empirical study of it (p. 14). He argues that the focus of our efforts to understand the "*scrutiny of individuals, groups, and contexts, through the use of technical means to extract or create information*" (p. 20, italics in the original) should be defined "around concepts and stories that help capture... 1) the structure of relationships between agents... and those they seek data from..., 2) characteristics of the means" with which they collect those data, "3) the goals of surveillance, 4) characteristics of the data" collected and their location, "5) social processes surrounding surveillance..., 6) cultural aspects of surveillance," and 7) a set of principles for assessing the ethics of surveillance practices (p. 6). *Windows* is built around these themes: the first part is a meta-analytic treatise on how we should be studying surveillance, the second explores the phenomenology of how surveillance is deployed and experienced by the watchers and the watched, and in the final we find an agenda for making normative judgments about new technologies.

Frustrated at what he sees as conceptual confusion, overlapping arguments, and a lack of knowledge-building in surveillance studies, Marx sets out to bring order to the chaos. Like a cartographer, he maps the field through schematics that classify ideas, define concepts, and identify surveillance-related trends and themes. Marx collates myriad terms—from "dataveillance" to "überveillance"—and inventories what he sees as the dominant motifs of the existing scholarship, ranging from "1) Surveillance is about the exercise of power" through "17) If we are not careful... dystopia is just around the corner, or at best a few blocks away" (pp. 45–46). In sorting through this

loquaciousness, Marx offers his own list of more than thirty “common attributes” and “dimensions” that he asserts can be used to investigate *any* act of surveillance. These are discrete either/or possibilities: is the surveillance “Visible” or “Less visible?” is the “Data collector” “Animate” or “Machine?” is the “Cost” “Expensive” or “Inexpensive?” and so on. Other parts of his classification include posing “why” questions of agents to ascertain goals, question the substance and nature of personal data, and engage in a discussion of social processes that attempts to capture the dynamic nature of surveillance. The result, Marx contends, is “a framework for the systematic analysis and comparison of particular applications, as well as across time periods, societies, institutions, organizations, and cultures” (p. 111).

Next, Marx turns to his surveillance stories and offers a series of satirical, composite case studies. These include an employee handbook developed by a high-tech company, an “omniscient organization” that weaves oppressive worker monitoring into its gleeful corporate culture, and a sales pitch from the entrepreneurial parenting industry, where children are seen as investments to be protected by a slew of tech-control strategies so that one can be “safe not sorry.” In another, we are privy to the clinical report of a “free-range voyeur” by the name of Tom I. Voire, who plays the dual roles of a *subject* of the surveillance that many of us face daily and a looking *agent* in a variety of surveillance activities and occupations. Tom is a complex character, “caught in a miasma of cultural confusion not of his making” (p. 231), who watches the private within the public through his male gaze. Marx asks us, “What’s wrong with Tom?” Lastly, we are introduced to Richard “Rocky” Bottoms, a security professional who extols the virtues of new technologies of security and surveillance in a speech to an industry trade group. Bottoms’s career, which moves in and out of public and private sectors, reflects what Marx sees as the “harmonization, migration, and blurring between, and even merging” of these realms, with Bottoms as “*homo securitas*” who “travels in the circuits of the global political economy of surveillance and helps sustain it” (p. 261–262).

Turning to values and the normative question of surveillance, Marx asks, “How should the technologies be judged?” It is clear that the author is not claiming that surveillance is inherently harmful; he states early on that “*surveillance by itself is neither good nor bad, but context and compartment make it so*” (p. 10, italics in original). Constantly probing settings and context, Marx lays out a list of no fewer than forty-four “techno-fallacies”—justifications and tacit assumptions such as technological determinism and neutrality—that he has found embedded in the rhetoric justifying surveillance with the intent of “sniffing out” the “intermingling of fact and value and the quality of the facts” (p. 270). Later, he poses dozens of questions that can be used to interrogate any particular surveillance practice or technique to assess its ethical justification. These probes are clustered around categories such as the “Initial Conditions: Policies, Procedures, and Capabilities” (“Is the tactic likely to create precedents that will lead to its application in undesirable ways?”), “Means” (“Is there human review of machine generated results?”), “Data Collection and Analysis” (“Does the technique cross a sensitive and intimate personal boundary?”), and the like.

As intriguing and well presented as Marx’s general framework for the analysis and comparison of surveillance practices across time and social space is, I find myself still rather skeptical of any attempt to narrowly define how an entire scholarly endeavor should be carried out, especially through the lens of such an all-encompassing schema. Moreover, some will find Marx’s use of satirical fiction more than unconventional, and, when juxtaposed to his simultaneous plea for strict social science theory construction, it is certainly extraordinary. Yet despite my being a practitioner of both the “surveillance essay” and the detailed empirical study approaches that Marx takes to task, I found much to like in *Windows*. It is a provocative and bold summation of a life’s work that challenges us to eschew inflated pronouncements and focus our attention on understanding the context and consequences of the new technologies and surveillance mechanisms that permeate our lives.